

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI
TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUBUMBASHI 0735

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: CG, MOPS, PINS
SUBJECT: FRENCH-BELGIAN TENSION OVER KILLING OF TWO ZAIRIAN
OFFICERS

REFC: LUBUMBASHI 0712

1. SUMMARY: ON EVENING OF JUNE 14, TWO ZAIRIAN ADJUTANTS
(WARRANT OFFICERS) WERE KILLED UNDER MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES
REPORTEDLY BY EUROPEAN TROOPS. LOCAL FRENCH AUTHORITIES
ARE TRYING TO PUT THE BLAME ON BELGIANS PARATROOPERS DESPITE
CONSIDERABLE PROOF THAT FRENCH LEGIONNAIRES WERE RESPONSIBLE
IF ISSUE RESURFACES, ZAIRIANS, FOR POLITICAL REASONS MIGHT
CHOOSE TO SUPPORT FRENCH CLAIMS DESPITE CONTRARY EVIDENCE.

END SUMMARY

2. TWO ZAIRIAN ADJUTANTS WERE KILLED IN CENTER OF LUBUMBASHI
ON EVENING OF JUNE 14. BEFORE DYING, ONE OF THE ADJUTANTS
IDENTIFIED ATTACKS AS EUROPEANS. BOTH BELGIANS AND FRENCH
WERE SUSPECTS, BUT WITH LITTLE EVIDENCE POINTING TO
LEGIONNAIRE UNITS WHO WERE SPENDING LAST NIGHT IN LUBUMBASHI
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BEFORE RETURNING TO CORSICA.

3. DURING MEETING ON JUNE 17, FRENCH CONSUL GENERAL
ARGUED STRONGLY THAT BELGIAN PARATROOPERS HAD KILLED
THE TWO ZAIRIANS. THE CONSUL GENERAL VOCIFEROUSLY
REFUSED TO ACCEPT FRENCH GUILT AND ADDED THAT HE PER
SONALLY AND OFFICIALLY DENIED ANY FRENCH CULPABILITY

TO COLONEL SASSA(DEPUTY TO GENERAL SINGA)

4. ON JUNE 19, COL DE PORTER(BELGIAN COMMANDER) SAID THERE WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT LEGIONNAIRES HAD KILLED THE 2 FAZ SOLDIERS. HE STATED THAT SINCE THE BELGIAN CAMP WAS NEAR THE SITE OF THE INCIDENT ZAIRIAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES IMMEDIATELY VISITED THE BELGIAN CAMP. THE BELGIANS WERE ABLE TO SHOW THAT ALL THEIR TROOPS WERE PRESENT AND THAT NONE OF THEIR WEAPONS HAD RECENTLY BEEN FIRED. THE ZAIRIANS THEN VISITED THE FRENCH CAMP WHERE THREE SOLDIERS COULD NOT BE LOCATED.

5. DE PORTER EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD SEEN A REPORT PREPARED BY FAZ LEGAL OFFICIALS DETAILING THE MURDER CASE. THE REPORT CHARGED THAT 3 FOREIGN LEGION DESERTERS HAD MURDERED THE TWO FAZ SOLDIERS WHEN THEY HAD ATTEMPTED TO ARREST THE FRENCH. THE LEGIONNAIRES WERE ARRESTED SOME TIME LATER BY FAZ MP PATROL. ONE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TURNED OVER TO THE FRENCH. FURTHER DE PORTER REPORTED THAT 3 LEGIONNAIRES, UNDER GUARD, WITHOUT SHOES OR BELTS, HAD BEEN PUT ON ONE OF THE LAST FRENCH TRANSAIRS WHICH DEPARTED LUBUMBASHI JUNE 16. DE PORTER CONJECTURED THAT THE FRENCH HAD MADE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR

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EXTRADITION IN CASES LIKE THIS BEFORE THE FRENCH INTERVENTION.

6. THE DE PORTER ACCOUNT IS SUBSTANTIATED IN OUTLINE BY OTHER REPORTS RECEIVED AT THE CONSULATE

7. COMMENT: THIS ISSUE MAY PROVE TO BE A TEMPEST IN A TEAPOT. HOWEVER IT CONTAINS THE SEEDS OF A MINOR INCIDENT SHOULD THE FRENCH OR THE BELGIANS WISH TO ALLOW THEM TO TAKE ROOT. THE CONTINUING SHIFTING OF BLAME SHOWS THE STRAIN HERE BETWEEN FRENCH AND BELGIAN AUTHORITIES. ALTHOUGH THE BELGIANS HAVE THUS FAR RESPONDED IN A LOW KEY MANNER, IF THE FRENCH RAISE THE ISSUE OF BLAME, A PUBLIC DISPUTE AND SPLIT IS LIKELY. SHOULD THIS OCCUR, THE GOZ MIGHT COME DOWN OFFICIALLY ON THE SIDE OF THE FRENCH WHICH WOULD FURTHER EXACERBATE TENSIONS ON THE ONE HAND BETWEEN THE BELGIANS AND ZAIRIANS AND ON THE OTHER BETWEEN THE BELGIANS AND THE FRENCH.

END COMMENT

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